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ABSTRACT

Information about the characteristics of black undergraduate students at the University of Maryland was obtained from the 1968 University Student Census, an activities and attitude inventory administered to all undergraduates registering for nine credit hours or more. The 366 respondents represent a majority (67 percent) of the black undergraduate student body of 554. The sample was comprised of 52 percent male and 48 percent female, and the class breakdown was 43 percent freshmen, 28 percent sophomores, 9 percent seniors, and 2 percent no classification. Black undergraduates were more concerned with studying efficiently and earning satisfactory grades than were non-blacks. Blacks were also more certain of their career goals, although they felt a greater need for educational counseling. Blacks and non-blacks felt faculty were interested in them, and were sufficiently available for assitance with class work. Blacks considered financial problems to be the main reason they may have to withdraw from school. Blacks were more interested than non-blacks in student organizations (other than fraternities and sororities). Fewer blacks owned cars, and more lived on campus than non-blacks. Blacks dated less, visited the Student Union more, and watched TV more. (SW)

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CULTURAL STUDY CENTER

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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CHARACTERISTICS OF BLACK UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, 1968-69

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Research Report # 1-69
CULTURAL STUDY CENTER
University of Maryland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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SUMMARY

Black undergraduates were more concerned with studying efficiently and earning satisfactory grades than were non-blacks. Blacks were also more certain of their career goals, although they felt a greater need for educational counseling. Blacks and non-blacks felt faculty were interested in them, and were sufficiently available for assistance with class work. Blacks considered financial problems to be the main reason they may have to withdraw from school.

Blacks were more interested than non-blacks in student organizations (other than fraternities and sororities). Fewer blacks owned cars, and more lived on campus than non-blacks. Blacks dated less, visited the Student Union more, and watched TV more.

This is the first of a series of reports on the characterisitics of student cultural groups at the University of Maryland. Future reports will focus on the determination of parameters of black students as a culture, and interactions with the University community as it affects their social, psychological and educational development.

The demographic information herein has been selected for its informative value. The source of the data is the fall, 1968 University Student Census (USC) administered by the Counseling Center. All undergraduates registering for nine hours or more are asked to complete the USC. The comprehensiveness of the data is limited by the restrictions of the sampling method employed. The sample described (N=366) represents a majority (67%) of the black undergraduate student body (N=554). In 1968-69 the black student population at College Park was 668;* 554 undergraduates and 114 graduate students. The black sample described here was 52% male and 48% female. The class breakdown was; freshmen 43%, sophomores 28%, juniors 18%, seniors 9%, no data 2%.

Responses to self-report questionnaires are often questioned regarding validity and reliability. Studies done on the USC have indicated that individual student responses tend to be consistent with one another. The data expressed here, then, are viewed as an accurate description of average black student responses. Of course, variability exists in the responses of both black and non-black students. Readers are therefore cautioned against stereotyping, which has long been a major barrier to interracial understanding. It is also likely that as more blacks, possibly representing a wider range of experiences and viewpoints, enter the University, many of the conclusions noted below may have to be altered. This data reported here should be viewed as characteristic of undergraduate blacks during the 1968-69 school year.

*According to best Cultural Study Center enrollment counts available as of October 1969.

Academic and Vocational Goals:

Black and non-black students considered studying efficiently and earning satisfactory grades to be the hardest part of adjustment to college, although blacks considered this a greater problem than did non-blacks. Black students reported studying about the same number of hours per week as non-black students, (average = 15 hours). Black students were more interested in seeking vocational and educational counseling, and help with study skills, or some other service from the Counseling Center. All students, including blacks expressed reluctance to chance a poor grade in a field about which they knew little. Black students expected to get more education and selected their major field of study, earlier than all non-blacks. Sixty-one percent of the blacks vs. 43% of all non-blacks decided on their major in high school. Similarly, blacks were more certain of their career goals and tended to choose them earlier, (junior in high school vs. senior in high school).

The main reasons new black students gave for attending the University of Maryland in order of importance were: it offers the kind of academic program they wanted, inexpensive costs, geographical location, and that Maryland was suggested by a counselor or teacher. New non-black students gave similar reasons for attending the University, but blacks tended to put more emphasis on academic programs.

A greater percentage of blacks listed job security (23% vs. 15%) and a desire to help others (23% vs. 15%) as important in their career plans. Both black and non-black students felt the most important reason to earn a degree was that it was the only way by which to enter a chosen profession.

Faculty Relationships

Black students felt, as did all other students, that their advisors were knowledgeable and skillful and showed sufficient interest in them. Similarly,

both blacks and non-blacks felt that faculty members were generally available for assistance with class work and that class worked contributed most to their development during the year.

Financial Position

Black students tended to list financial problems as a possible reason for future withdrawals, and over half (59%) are on financial aid. More were interested in finding a part-time job than were non-blacks. The father's occupation of new black students tended to be non-professional, i.e., clerical, service or protective, skilled worked or foreman, and the educational level of the parents of black students tended to be lower than that of other students.

Campus Life

Blacks were not interested in fraternity or sorority membership even though they were more interested in student organizations as a whole; i.e., SGA, subject-matter clubs, musical and drama groups, publications, communication, etc. Blacks dated less, and watched TV more than non-black students. "Dates per month" averaged 3.8 for blacks, 4.6 for non-black freshmen, and 5.5 for all non-black students. Blacks watched TV about 5.5 hours per week compared to about 4 hours for non-blacks. Blacks tended to visit the Student Union more than non-blacks. Fewer black students owned or used cars on campus (49% vs. 63%), and more black students lived on campus (52% vs. 32%).